



Testimony in Support of SB 1095, An Act Concerning School Resource Officers.

Dear Chairs Currey and McCrory, Vice Chairs Winfield and Leeper, Ranking Members McCarty and Berthel, and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Emma, and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 1095 - An Act Concerning School Resource Officers**. This bill would publicly outline the duties of school resource officers as well as enable school counselors, psychologists, and social workers to serve as School Resource Officers. Connecticut invests heavily in officers who then police schools, and these SROs can promote a culture of hostility, especially against minority students, and breach their codes of conduct. This legislation ensures they have a clearly defined role, which increases accountability and enables options for students to get treatment when they need it.

Students need a culture of care and respect, not violence and punishment. By ensuring School Resource Officers go through training specifically related to social-emotional learning and restorative practices, students can learn in an environment where they feel comfortable. And when something goes wrong, SROs can be held accountable for their actions.

Student mental health matters. Schools are where they are most likely to tap into mental health resources. In fact, they are 21 times more likely to visit school-based health centers for treatment than anywhere else. Unfortunately, funding for SROs as separate from counselors and psychologists means that these positions are chronically under-funded. In status quo, 80% of students do not receive treatment for mental health problems because they simply do not have the resources. These problems are especially acute in the low-income, majority-minority districts that Connecticut serves.

There is precedent for implementing this policy. 28 states and DC require this training for SROs. However, only Maryland and Utah explicitly include provisions for training that ensure social-emotional awareness— CT can be a leader in this field.

In conclusion, I urge you to help our schools fulfill their responsibility to better the students who attend. This is only possible when SROs have a clear, defined role, one which they cannot abuse. I ask you to favorably vote this bill out of the Education Committee so that students can access the support they need.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Emma Polinsky
New Haven, CT